

Summary of Forest Plan Revision Scoping Comments

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests released a proposed action for revising their combined forest plans in July, 2014. The initial 60 day scoping period for the proposed action began on July 15, 2014 and was scheduled to close on September 15. Because of high public interest the forests opted to extend the scoping period an additional 60 days to November 14, 2014. As a result of this public outreach the forests received 13,868 total comments on the proposed action.

Comments were submitted as emails, letters, post cards, directly to the forest webpage online map tool, and directly to CARA. CARA (Comment Analysis and Response Application) is a database the forests use to collect, analyze and archive public comments. All public comments are viewable on the CARA reading room at: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?project=44089>.

Highlights

- About 3,200 unique comments from individuals
- 43 letters from organizations and 16 from public agencies
- 10,370 form letters
- 230 postcards
- 236 comments from the online mapping tool
- A majority of comments focused on motorized vs. non-motorized recreation. Many were a “vote” for Option A or Option B (regarding special management areas in the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness Area), or for the Friends of the Clearwater’s proposed alternative (9,856 email comments)
- Many individuals submitted the same comments numerous times - as multiple emails, hard copy letters, through the map tool, and directly to CARA
- Many comments from organizations or public agencies focused on specific language for objectives, standards, guidelines, or desired conditions

Frequent Comments

1. Motorized or mechanized vehicles **should** or **should not** be allowed in recommended wilderness areas (the Great Burn/Hoodoo area).
2. Specific adjacent areas (named in various letters) should be open for snowmobiling and added to Special Management Areas.
3. The revised forest plan should not reduce protections for fisheries, wildlife, watersheds, soil, water quality and others; the proposed action plan components should be grouped together in their own section rather than dispersed through other sections.
4. PTSQ should be **higher** or **lower** than ranges stated in the proposed action.
5. All forest Inventoried Roadless Areas should be designated as Recommended Wilderness Areas.
6. The revised forest plan should favor measureable standards and guidelines over non-enforceable objectives or desired conditions.
7. Weitas Creek, Big Sands Creek, Storm Creek, American River, Red River, Crooked Creek, Warm Springs Creek, Boulder Creek, Old Man Creek, Potlatch River, Elk River, and Horse Creek should be considered eligible for wild and scenic river status.
8. Mechanical and hand vegetation treatments should be emphasized over prescribed fire.

9. Maximum regen harvest unit size should not be raised over existing limit (40 acres).
10. MA categories are too broad, and should be segregated into more specific management areas.
11. The revised forest plan should offer the same or more protection to aquatic species than PACFISH/INFISH to ensure continued habitat improvement and recovery of the species.
12. Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark should get special management area protection with a boundary and specific desired conditions.
13. Desired conditions and other management direction for old growth in the proposed action are inadequate.
14. ROS designations in certain areas (named in various letters) should be changed.
15. Mountain bikes should get a corridor (special management area) in Great Burn recommended wilderness.
16. "Historical site conditions" of some back country airstrips may not be safe and should allow for safety-related improvements (i.e., enlarged if encroached on by vegetation).
17. The revised forest plan should take climate change in consideration when devising alternatives and analyzing effects.
18. The effects analysis should include the economic effects to local communities of recreation, timber harvest, and other benefits such as watershed and wildlife.
19. The revised forest plan should provide predictability and stability for livestock operators; the plan should restrict grazing where necessary to protect resource values and prevent the spread of invasive weeds.
20. Wildlife habitat should be managed to improve fisher habitat and provide additional acres of mature forest stands with complex structure and high connectivity; elk habitat should be managed to provide additional foraging, calving and thermal cover.

Alternatives Requested by Organizations

1. Clearwater Basin Collaborative requests an alternative that would provide a higher PTSQ than the range described in the proposed action, regardless of budget.
2. Idaho County Commissioners request a "maximum recreation alternative" that provides for increased motorized access.
3. Friends of the Clearwater provided an outline for an alternative which was endorsed by numerous commenters.
4. Backcountry Sled Patriots, Bitterroot Ridge Runners, and others request an alternative with additions to special management areas.
5. Idaho Conservation League, Wilderness Society, Sierra Club request an alternative that proposes all IRAs be added to recommended wilderness.
6. Idaho Rivers United, American Whitewater, Pacific Rivers Council, Trout Unlimited request an alternative that adds more river segments to Wild and Scenic river list.
7. ICL/Wilderness society requests an alternative that assigns primitive (PR) and semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) Recreational Opportunity Spectrum settings to all areas recommended for wilderness, and that allocates Cayuse and West Fork Meadow Creek SMAs to either SPNM or PR.